



**AFTON LODGE
AUXILIARY
HOSPITAL**

AFTON LODGE AUXILIARY HOSPITAL

Date Built and Current Status:

Unknown; possibly late 19th Century – Still Standing

History:

*Private Home
Red Cross Auxiliary Hospital
Flats*

Dates as Hospital:

August 1914 – 30 June 1919

Address:

Afton Road, Freshwater



Afton Lodge. Totland and Freshwater Archive Group

Afton Lodge was built as a private home (date unknown) and has had a number of occupants as well as connections to the Tennyson family. In November 1897 Mrs William Boyle, the then previous occupier of Afton Lodge placed an advert in the Isle of Wight County Press to obtain a new job for her gardener. Mrs William

MRS. William Boyle, lately of Afton Lodge, Freshwater, is anxious to recommend Frank Carpenter, who was with her for nine months as UNDER-GARDENER and only left because Mrs. Boyle was moving to London.—Apply for character to Mr. Frank Young, gardener, Afton Lodge, Freshwater, I. W.

Mrs William Boyle was the mother of Audrey Georgiana Florence Boyle (who upon marrying Hallam Tennyson in 1884; the son of Alfred Lord Tennyson, became Lady Tennyson).

In 1899 Mr Ernest .J Gunner, who was Lord Tennyson's agent whilst Governor in South Australia was the occupier of Afton Lodge; then in 1900 Mr Shaw was there.

Lord and Lady Tennyson and their three sons left Australia in mid-December 1903 and lived at Farringford in Freshwater (the former home of Alfred Lord Tennyson).

Mr George H F Duncan and his wife Harriet Reid 'Katie' owned it in 1910 (although the 1911 census has them living in Kensington). At the outbreak of the war in August of 1914 Mr Duncan offered Afton Lodge to Lord Tennyson, to do what he thought best with it; Lady Tennyson claimed it as a military hospital, to be worked under the War Office. A telephone was also installed by Mr Duncan.

The Freshwater V.A.D. made it ready for its use and after an appeal for male recruits 16 joined from Yarmouth and a further 35 from Freshwater. It was hoped 18 stretcher bearers would be available with the hospital initially able to accommodate 21 wounded; five of the beds were available for any local cases and the remaining 16 for wounded and sick from the Front. The Hospital was directly under the War Office. Mrs McMaster, Commandant of the Freshwater V.A.D., acted as Matron and Sister Astbury and members

of the men's and women's Freshwater V.A.D.s, were in attendance day and night. Until the arrival of the wounded the staff were kept busy with cases from the soldiers in the district with between 60 and 70 patients arriving with accidents and illnesses all being treated within the first few weeks.

Lady Tennyson and Mrs McMaster (who, like Lady Tennyson, had three sons in the forces) was the matron, Miss Astbury was the sister-in-charge and the remainder of the staff consisted of Nurses Waistell and McMaster, Miss N. McMaster and Miss Tankard (cooks), Mr Burke (male night nurse), Mr Pawson (orderly) and Mrs Cryer. The Freshwater and Totland V.A.D.s of the British Red Cross Society also each provided one nurse, who did a fortnight's duty. Capt. Morley, Royal Army Medical Corps and Drs A. H. Hopkins and S. L. O. Young were medical officers. Miss Collinson became the hospital's Matron in 1915.



Painting: Audrey, Lady Tennyson with the wolfhound Karenina
By Briton Riviere,
National Library of Australia

Afton Lodge was not Lady Tennyson's first hospital work as she already had experience of setting up South Australia's first maternity hospital. Concerned especially about the plight of women in the outback, she wanted them to have, after delivery, the benefit of 'rest & quiet & the best trained nursing & food' until they were fit to cope at home without female or professional assistance.

Lady Tennyson—annoyed to find that the wealthiest practitioners were so 'furious at the idea of losing a few fees' that they remained indifferent to the needs of countrywomen and wrote to newspapers criticizing her scheme—pressed on. She oversaw the design and construction of the building down to the last detail. Her supporters wanted the hospital named in her honour but she insisted on it being a memorial to Queen Victoria. The Queen's Home (later the Queen Victoria Maternity Hospital) was opened in May 1902. (Extract from The Australian Dictionary of Biography).

In October 1916 Mrs Duncan, died and was buried in London with a service taking place at All Saints' Church, Freshwater. D. A. Duncan 2nd Lieutenant of the 15th Hussars her son, was present along with Mr Duncan.

Lady Tennyson purchased materials and the volunteers would go to Farringford House to assist in making bandages, pillow-slips, shirts, and mattresses.

A war relief committee was formed for Freshwater and Totland, with Lord Tennyson as president, the Rector (the Reverend Andrew. J. Robertson, M.A.) as honorary secretary, and Mr J. R. W. Henry, of Locksley, Freshwater, as honorary treasurer. It was proposed to deal with any cases of distress amongst the civilian population of the two parishes and the families of soldiers and sailors (in connection with the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Association); to assist local Red Cross work, and to subscribe to the Isle of Wight central fund when started. Donations were received from: Mr G. F. Duncan £30, Sir Francis Gore, J.P., £10, Mr E. Granville Ward, J.P. £50, Mr F. Tankard £10, Lord Tennyson £20, Lady Tennyson £5 and the Rev. A. J. Robertson £5.

Afton Lodge received its first patients on Sunday 30 August 1914 and a short service was held that evening by the Reverend Robertson and was attended by the hospital's staff. Additionally non V.A.D. members also assisted at the hospital: Mrs T. W. Grant, Secretary; Major Chamberlain, Treasurer; Miss Young, Miss de Cetto, Miss F. Spicer, and Scouts P. Young, J. and E. Passmore Edwards, L. Jones, C. Coats, L. Richardson, Mrs Blake (cook), Mrs John Jackman, Mrs George Cass, Mrs Harrison, Mrs Oliver, Mrs Charles Calloway, Mrs Guy, Mrs Slingsby, and Mrs Locke. Whilst money was granted for the up-keep of the Hospital everything given to the Hospital was sent to direct to Lady Tennyson, as Lady Superintendent.

Visitors, whilst not discouraged were only allowed to the Hospital on Thursday afternoons between 2.30pm and 4pm and then only by signed cards from Mrs McMaster, Mrs Grant or from Lady Tennyson.

On 29 January 1916 the Tennyson's youngest son, Harold Courtney Tennyson was killed aged 19 on H.M. Torpedo-Boat Destroyer, Viking when it hit a mine whilst on patrol in the English Channel. (Aubrey, another son would also be killed in action in March 1918).

On Tuesday 5 December 1916 Lady Tennyson was at work in the hospital and though feeling very unwell she carried on and the following morning went to the hospital once more. In the afternoon she went to bed and didn't appear very unwell but fell unconscious during the day. The following day her condition worsened and she died during the evening of Pneumonia. It was felt that the death of her son Harold, had by December taken its toll on her and affected her; with her friends saying they had noticed her 'more and more changed and crushed beneath an unceasing heartache.' She was buried in All Saints Church in Freshwater.

In October 1917 the following was reported "*His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to award the Royal Red Cross Decoration to the under mentioned ladies of the Nursing Services in recognition of their valuable service in connection with the War: Second Class - Miss Florence Beatrice Astbury; Matron and Miss Isabel Mary Watson; Nurse. Afton Lodge Auxiliary Hospital, Freshwater, Isle of Wight.*"

The Hospital closed on 30 June 1919 and had treated 2109 patients and doubled the number of beds from the 20 it opened it with to 40 by the time it closed. It was placed on the market in March 1920

By 1928 Captain Arthur Parish and his wife Helen were now the owners. Arthur Parish died in 1942 and the property and contents put up for sale. Helen moved to Kingston-Upon-Thames and died in 1962 but both Helen's and their daughter's ashes were interred with Arthur in All Saints Church in Freshwater on their deaths.

In 1947 Mrs Gall appears to be the owner as the gardens were opened to the public; the gardens having been looked after by Arthur Parish when he owned it. Just one year later Lady A.M. Ramsbotham had taken up residence. There continued to be support for nurses from Lady Ramsbotham organising fundraising events for the District Nurses' pension fund in the time she was at Afton Lodge.

In 1963 Afton Lodge was now being prefixed by numbers having been split into five separate flats which it still is today.

List of Volunteers at Afton Lodge Auxiliary Hospital

Name	Duties
Daintree, Theodora	Cook & Kitchen Maid
Fitzgerald, Agnes Mary Philomena	Ward Maid
Heaton-Ellis, Mildred Katherine Grace	Nurse
Hoblyn, Joan Winifred	Chauffeuse & Ambulance Driver
McMaster, Nora	Cook
Nickalls, Everild	Probationer Nurse & Nurse
Waistell, Irene	Nurse



Dorothy Lord. Courtesy of Totland and Freshwater Archive Group

